

properly sent to an Alms house, than to a Penitentiary. One of them was convicted nearly two years ago of stealing twenty four mackerel. He was then afflicted with diseased thigh-bone (necrosis of the femur,) and as soon as he was delivered to the Penitentiary authorities, was conducted to the hospital for medical advice. A formidable operation has since been performed for his relief, and he is not yet well. The whole of his time of sentence, which has nearly expired, has been spent in the hospital of this prison.

In this instance where did the punishment fall? Upon the convict who has been comfortably provided for,—who has been nursed and attended gratuitously for two years: or upon the community which has borne the expense? This is by no means a solitary case. In another instance a colored man who was condemned, or rather the State was condemned to support a colored man, for two years, who was almost totally blind, so much so as to be disabled from labor; which sentence was accordingly carried into execution. The lucky convict lived in the hospital during the whole period allotted him, passing the time no doubt very comfortably.

These cases are of frequent occurrence, and necessarily impose considerable expense upon the institution. Can nothing be done to prevent the Penitentiary from becoming an alms-house?

I cannot conclude this paper without adverting to one cause of disease which comes under our care, and which demands a speedy remedy. I allude to the deplorable condition in which prisoners are kept in the county jails while awaiting trial. The jails of Maryland afford abundant opportunity for the exertions of the philanthropy of a Howard.

Reason and humanity forbid that a person merely suspected of crime should be submitted to greater punishment than is inflicted upon those who are convicted and condemned. Yet such is the case in our State. The inmates of jails are not provided with beds or bedding. They lie on the bare floor even in the winter time,—sometimes during an entire winter. They are not afforded a change of garment,—as they fall into the hands of the law, so they lie, and consequently many of them remain for months in a most disgusting condition,—cold, filthy, and swarming with vermin. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that disease often results, or that when it has previously existed it should become highly aggravated.

When sickness occurs, there is no infirmary or sick ward to which the patient may be conveyed for treatment. A physician attends to so what can be done under the circumstances, and surely no physician has more unpleasant duties to perform or more obstacles to contend with. He finds his patient stretched in a corner of the common room, enveloped in filth and vermin. Perhaps a few blankets may be spread beneath him, or a bag of hay possibly in extreme cases may be procured. But this is the extent of the accommodations accessible to the poor wretch suspected of crime.